

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 148856

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MOSCOW NEW DELHI TEHRAN CINCPAC 26 JUL 73 FROM KABUL RPT TO
YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 5540

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AF

SUBJ: REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN: PROSPECTS

SUMMARY: BASED ON WHAT WE KNEW PREVIOUSLY OF PRESIDENT
DAUD, HIS COUNTRY, HIS INITIAL POLICY SPEECH JULY 17,
AMBASSADOR NEUMANN'S DISCUSSIONS WITH DAUD AND PRINCE NAIM,
AND SKETCHY INFORMATION OBTAINED SINCE JULY 17 COUP, EMBASSY
OFFERS FOLLOWING ANALYSIS OF TAKEOVER, ASSESSMENT OF
NEW REGIME'S PROSPECTS AND TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS USG
POLICY: (1) COUP WAS EXECUTED BY SMALL NUMBER MOSTLY JUNIOR
MILITARY OFFICERS (NOW BEING MOVED INTO POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY
IN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT), APPARENTLY WITHOUT SOVIET
KNOWLEDGE OR CONNIVANCE; (2) SLOWNESS OF GOVERNMENT TO MAKE TOP-
LEVEL CIVILIAN APPOINTMENTS INDICATES LIKELIHOOD THAT TIMING
OF COUP WAS MOVED UP, EITHER BECAUSE KING UNEXPECTEDLY LEFT
COUNTRY IN JULY (RATHER THAN USUAL SEPTEMBER ABSENCE) OR TO
FORESTALL ANOTHER PLANNED COUP; (3) INTERNAL POLITICAL
INSTABILITY MAY WELL BECOME HALLMARK OF COUNTRY IN FUTURE, JUST
AS STABILITY WAS FOR LONG STAGNANT, INEFFICIENT DEPOSED REGIME;
(4) THERE IS AS YET NO JUSTIFICATION FOR ASSUMING USSR WILL HAVE
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GREATER INFLUENCE IN REPUBLICAN AFGHANISTAN THAN IT DID UNDER
MONARCHICAL REGIME; (5) AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBORS, IRAN AND
PAKISTAN, COULD DO NO GREATER DISSERVICE THAN TO FORMULATE
JOINT PLANS OR ACTION CONSTRUABLE AS AIMED AGAINST AFGHANISTAN;

AND (6) USG SHOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE STRONG PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AS MODERATING INFLUENCE ON HEADSTRONG LEADERSHIP, USING ECONOMIC AID AS INCENTIVE TO ACHIEVE PRIMARY US GOALS, ESPECIALLY INCLUDING ENCOURAGEMENT MODERATE REGIME, REGIONAL STABILITY, AND EARLY AFGHAN COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS CONTROL. END SUMMARY.

1. IT NOW CLEAR THAT JULY 17 COUP WAS EXECUTED BY SMALL NUMBER JUNIOR OFFICERS, PERHAPS AS FEW AS 15 LIEUTENANTS AND CAPTAINS AND 300 OR FEWER ORDINARY SOLDIERS. INDICATIONS ARE THAT NEW REGIME'S LEADERSHIP, FAR FROM HAVING PRECONCEIVED PROGRAM OF ACTION, HAD CONCENTRATED UNTIL JULY 17 SOLELY ON SEIZURE OF POWER. NEW GOVERNMENT MADE STRONG INITIAL EFFORT TO PRESENT POSTURE OF CONFIDENCE, VITALITY AND BUREAUCRATIC CONTINUITY, BUT THESE WERE PRIMARILY COSMETICS DESIGNED TO ASSURE A SHOCKED POPULACE AND TO GAIN DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION FROM WORLD.

2. EXTENT TO WHICH ESSENTIAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES (COMMUNICATIONS, POLICE, TRAVEL) HAVE BEEN RESUMED IS ENCOURAGING; BUT CONTINUATION OF POSITIVE ACTIVITIES PREVIOUS REGIME IS UNDERGOING NOTICEABLE SLOWDOWN. OBVIOUS LACK OF POSTCOUP PLANNING PERHAPS EXPLAINABLE SIMPLY BECAUSE PLOTTERS DID NOT EXPECT TO SUCCEED SO EASILY; HOWEVER IT ALSO LIKELY THAT (AS DATT HAS REPORTED IR-6-800-0155-73 OF JULY 25) COUP PLANNERS HAD TO MOVE TIMING UP EITHER (1) BECAUSE KING LEFT COUNTRY EARLIER THAN NORMAL (JULY INSTEAD OF SEPTEMBER) OR (2) THERE WAS ANOTHER COUP PLANNED (ABDUL WALI AND/OR MOUSSA SHAFIQ) AND DAUD'S FORCES MOVED FIRST.

3. NEW REGIME'S LEADERSHIP IN CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAS NATURAL DIVISION ALONG GENERATIONAL LINES. INFORMATION NOW BEGINNING TO EMERGE ON IDENTITIES OF YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS ON COMMITTEE BUT LITTLE IS KNOWN OF THEIR ATTITUDES AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH DAUD AND HIS "OLD GUARD". APPARENTLY PRESIDENT DAUD IS MOVING AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO PLACE THEM IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY IN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, BUT IF HISTORY OF MILITARY COUPS ANY GUIDE, ONCE ARMY ENTERS POLITICS, IT RELUCTANT TO RETURN FULL CONTROL TO CIVILIANS. WE THEREFORE REMAIN UNEASY ABOUT DAUD'S CONFIDENTIAL

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ABILITY EVEN IN SHORT RUN TO PERSUADE ARMY TO RETURN TO BARRACKS.

4. THERE IS STILL NO RPT NO INFORMATION TO SUPPORT SPECULATION THAT SOVIETS EITHER HAD FOREKNOWLEDGE OR ASSISTED IN COUP ONCE IT BECAME KNOWN. EARLY RECOGNITION NEW REGIME BY USSR EXPLAINABLE BY NATURAL DESIRE NORTHERN NEIGHBOR TO GET OFF ON RIGHT FOOT WITH COUNTRY IN WHICH IT HAS SUBSTANTIAL GEOPOLITICAL INTEREST AND SIZEABLE ECONOMIC TIES, LARGER THAN THAT OF ANY OTHER POWER. ALL WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN IS EMPHATIC ASSERTION OF NEW LEADERS, BOTH DAUD AND NAIM, WHICH WE ACCEPT FOR TIME BEING, THAT THERE WAS NO RPT NO SOVIET INVOLVMENT (NAIM QUOTED SOVIET AMBASSADOR PUZANOV AS SAYING TO DAUD THAT "EVEN I DID NOT KNOW THIS WAS COMING"). ALSO, JUNIOR OFFICERS PROMINENT IN COUP HAVE BEEN HEARD TO SCORN-

FULLY DISMISS ANY RUSSIAN PART. WHETHER THAT IS ACTUALLY TRUE
WE MAY NEVER KNOW.

5. WE ARE INCLINED TO ACCEPT AT FACE VALUE DAUD'S AND NAIM'S
ASSERTIONS THAT THEY ARE INDEPENDENT NATIONALISTS AND DO NOT AND
WILL NOT FOLLOW RUSSIAN OR ANYBODY ELSE'S ORDERS. BUT REAL
QUESTION IS WHETHER THEIR OWN POLICIES PLAY INTO RUSSIAN HANDS,
WHETHER THEY WANT THEM TO OR NOT, THUS BECOMING DESTABILIZING TO
THE REGION. PRIOR TO COUP, EMBASSY GENERALLY ACCEPTED THESIS THAT
SOVIETS HAD COME TO ACCEPT NON-ALIGNED AFGHAN POSTURE AS
COMPATIBLE WITH LONG-TERM SOVIET INTERESTS, WHICH CALLED FOR
RELATIVELY STABLE (ALBEIT BACKWARD) NEIGHBOR WHICH WOULD DO NOTHING
TO DISTURB TRANQUILITY OF REGION, OR GROWING USSR ECONOMIC AND
POLITICAL TIES IN THE SUBCONTINENT, AT EXPENSE, AT LEAST
IMPLICITLY IF NOT EXPLICITLY, OF CHINA. WHETHER SOVIET OBJECTIVES
HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE, OR HAVE CHANGED, WE CANNOT YET DETERMINE. THERE
IS NOT YET ANY DEMONSTRABLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CLAIM THAT SOVIETS
WILL HAVE EASIER TIME WITH REFORMIST, AUTHORITARIAN, REPUBLICAN AND
POTENTIALLY UNSTABLE AND PREDICTABLE PREDECESSOR GOVERNMENT.

6. FUTURE AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN WILL HAVE TO AWAIT
SPECIFIC POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS AND ACTIONS OF NEW GOVERNMENT.
PRESIDENT DAUD HAS BEEN QUESTIONED CLOSELY BY AMBASSADOR NEUMANN
AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES IN KABUL, AS WELL AS BY FOREIGN JOURNALISTS
ON HIS REFERENCE IN JULY 17 SPEECH TO PASHTUNISTAN. DAUD HAS
REMAINED VAGUE AS TO HOW HE WISHES TO "SETTLE" ISSUE WHICH PAKISTAN
CONSIDERS ARTIFICIALLY ENGENDERED, MEDDLESOME AND PROFITLESS TO
PURSUE. SOME OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE HIS PUBLIC REFERENCE TO
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PASHTUNISTAN WAS MADE TO ATTRACT SUPPORT OF SUPERNATIONALISTS FOR
REPUBLICAN REGIME IN EARLY DAYS, WHILE OTHERS BELIEVE PREVIOUS
REGIME'S FAILURE TO TAKE ACTION ON PASHTUNISTAN DURING "GOLDEN
OPPORTUNITIES" OF 1965 AND 1971 WAS ONE PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR
STAGING COUP. DAUD HAS ALWAYS BEEN POPULAR AMONG "PASHTUNISTANIS"
BUT UNLIKE PREDECESSOR GOVERNMENTS UNDER DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT
(WHO KEPT ISSUE ALIVE PURELY FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROPOGANDA
PURPOSES), HE MAY BE EXPECTED TO DO SOMETHING MORE. THERE IS NO
DOUBT THAT DAUD WAS DEEPLY HUMILIATED BY BEING FORCED TO RETREAT
ON PASHTUNISTAN POLICY IN PAST WHEN CLOSURE OF PAK BORDER
INFLECTED GREAT HARM ON AFGHANISTAN. THAT THIS CONTRIBUTED TO HIS
DOWNFALL IN 1963 MAY GIVE RISE TO DESIRE FOR "ANOTHER ROUND";
YET, ONE SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT A MAN WITH INTELLIGENCE OF DAUD
SHOULD HAVE LEARNED NOTHING FROM TEN YEARS OF BROODING EXILE FROM
POWER. THUS WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE. OTHER THINGS BEING
EQUAL, CONTINUED STRONG US PRESENCE HERE CAN BE USEFUL
TO MAKE WEIGHT FELT ON DAUD SHOULD HE TURN ON PAKISTAN IN TOO
MILITANT A FASHION.

7. NEW REGIME HAS SAID NOTHING ABOUT RELATIONS WITH IRAN. DAUD
HAS SAID PUBLICLY HE WOULD DO NOTHING ABOUT HELMAND WATERS
TREATY WITH IRAN (SIGNED BY PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT AND RATIFIED BY

PARLIAMENT, BUT NOT BY KING) UNTIL HE HAS HAD CHANCE TO STUDY IT (KABUL 5492). OBSERVERS HERE SPECULATE HE WILL THINK TWICE BEFORE REJECTING IT; WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT HAS OBVIOUS ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR COUNTRY. DAUD CAN BE EXPECTED TO RESPOND TO IRANIAN FEARS ABOUT HIS ALLEGED PRO-SOVIET INCLINATIONS WITH GREAT IRRITATION. AFGHANS HAVE ALWAYS RESENTED SHAH'S PATERNALISTIC PROFESSIONS OF CONCERN OVER UNDUE SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFGHAN AFFAIRS; THEY FEEL IRANIAN CONCERN IS NOT ONLY TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED BUT IS SMOKESCREEN FOR OWN DESIRE TO MEDDLE IN COUNTRY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. RECENT IMPROVEMENT IN PAK-IRANIAN RELATIONS

IS LIKELY TO BE VIEWED HERE AS EFFORT TO SECURE FURTHER IRANIAN HEGEMONY IN REGION. WE THEREFORE CONCLUDE THAT, EVEN THOUGH AFGHANISTAN MAY HAVE MORE TO LOSE THAN IRAN OR PAKISTAN IF RELATIONS DETERIORATE WITH EITHER NEIGHBORING POWER, IRAN'S FEAR OF AFGHANISTAN FALLING INTO SOVIET ORBIT COULD TURN INTO SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY IF TWO POWERS TOOK ANY JOINT ACTION THAT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS AIMED AGAINST AFGHANISTAN.

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8. OUTLOOK FOR U.S. RELATIONS WITH NEW REGIME WILL, OF COURSE, BE COLORED BY GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO CONSOLIDATE POWER AND TO FOCUS DECISIVELY ON PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS, GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY. ON STRICTLY BILATERAL BASIS, THERE IS NO REASON WHY US-AFGHAN RELATIONS CANNOT BE AS GOOD (OR EVEN BETTER) THAN THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST. IF NEW LEADERSHIP REALLY MEANS THEY WISH TO BE NEUTRAL AND INDEPENDENT, THEIR DESIRE FOR SIGNIFICANT AMERICAN PRESENCE SHOULD INCREASE AS SUSPICION OF MOSCOW TIE LINGERS. ON DOMESTIC GROUNDS, TOO, A SIGNIFICANT AMERICAN PRESENCE SHOULD BE IMPORTANT TO THE AFGHANS. THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY NO ENTHUSIASM FOR WEAK AND VACILLATING MONARCHY. BUT BY NO STRETCH OF IMAGINATION CAN ONE DETECT ANY ENTHUSIASMS FOR DAUD; THERE IS RESPECT, PROBABLY FEAR, BUT CERTAINLY NO LOVE. HENCE NEW REGIME WILL HAVE TO PERFORM FAIRLY QUICKLY AND IN WAYS WHICH SHOWN EARLY SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR COMMON PEOPLE. NAIM'S REMARKS TO AMBASSADOR (KABUL 5325) CLEARLY INDICATE THAT NEW GOVERNMENT IS KEENLY AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM. HERE, TOO, US ASSISTANCE WOULD SEEM TO BE IMPORTANT, NOT ONLY FOR ITS SIZE BUT PERHAPS EVEN MORE FOR THE CHARACTER OF OUR TECHNICAL AND MANAGERIAL ADVICE WHICH THE AFGHANS FIND MORE PERTINENT AND DISINTERESTED THAN THAT WHICH COMES FROM OTHER SOURCES. NOW THAT THE ARMY (ESPECIALLY THE YOUNGER OFFICERS) HAVE ENTERED POLITICAL ARENA, FUTURE COUPS ARE DISTINCT POSSIBILITY IF DAUD DOES NOT PRODUCE RESULTS MORE QUICKLY THAN HAS BEEN EVIDENT THUS FAR.

9. IF THESE INITIAL ASSUMPTIONS PROVE CORRECT -- AND WE SHALL HAVE TO OBSERVE PATIENTLY FOR A WHILE -- THE U.S. HAS IMPORTANT CARDS TO PLAY. IF DAUD GOVERNMENT SOON PROVES TO BE MORE DECISIVE AND EFFECTIVE IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE THAN MOST OF GOVERNMENTS OF PAST TEN YEARS (A REAL POSSIBILITY), US ASSISTANCE CAN BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO AFGHANISTAN THAN IN

THE PAST. IF, THEN, DAUD WERE TO ENGAGE
IN POLICIES TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBORS WHICH WE REGARD AS POTENTIALLY
DESTABILIZING AND INIMICAL TO OUR INTERESTS, THE POSSIBILITY
OF WITHDRAWAL US ASSISTANCE COULD SERVE AS SOMEWHAT OF A
DETERRENT, IF SUBTLY BUT FIRMLY PLAYED. USG INTEREST IN
SECURING EARLY AND EFFECTIVE AFGHAN COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS
CONTROL MEASURES CAN ALSO BE SERVED BY USING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE
CARROT TACTICS. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN OUR AID EFFORT,
THEREFORE, REMAIN IMPORTANT, AS IN THE PAST.

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10. UNTIL SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME EMERGES MORE CLEARLY, WE SHOULD
CONTINUE WITH BUSINESS AS USUAL AND LISTEN WITH SYMPATHY
AND INTEREST TO NEW PROPOSALS. OUR ACTIONS WILL OF COURSE DEPEND ON
THE NATURE OF AFGHANISTAN'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIRECTION
AS IT EMERGES. AT SAME TIME WE SHOULD COUNSEL AGAINST
ALARMIST TALK AND ACTION IN IRAN AND PAKISTAN -- HOWEVER UNDERSTANDABLE
AND POTENTIALLY JUSTIFIABLE. AT THIS TIME BOTH STYLE AND
ACTION ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT.
NEUMANN UNQUOTE ROGERS

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